

YOSEMITE II CREW: Steven Roach

Being in the Backcountry for one season is enough to alter lives for the rest of their course. The conveniences and escapes of society have turned many Americans into shallow babies. In a culture of excess and mindless consumption true reflection comes when these stimuli are removed. The clarity in the forest with the absence of advertisement and politics coupled with hard work put focus on core values and undiluted introspection.

The biggest challenge for me was the camp life, where the backcountry masterminds concocted our small families. The members of the group, of all backgrounds, races, varying ages, and viewpoints are family for five months. I often find myself defining things by how they are different, with people it could be race, dialect, views on life, or even foods we eat. The focus on differences often alienates us from these different people because of the tension they create. With no escape from these different people, we were forced to push through differences that seemed significant at the time. Once these are pushed aside, similarities are more evident. By focusing on similarities and pushing through differences, a sense of connection to all people arises. This sense of community is important in that it can be brought back to society and applied on a larger scale. It is easier to relate to people when you are forced to practice tolerance every day.

The woods have an extremely calming effect on me as well. Where thoughts are interrupted in society by outside stimuli, the woods are nice to reflect in. Reflecting inward is something of a necessity without internet, television, or drugs.

And so, these communities of variant strangers are transformed into independent community minded workers with respect for the environment.

This program is valuable for a society where laziness of body and thought, selfish slogging through catalogues of plastic images and lust for items are rampant. Living in the woods and shedding pounds, losing the drugs, focusing thought, and paring down material possessions strip the neon stimuli of society and set the focus inward and outward, on others.

Backcountry is a model for society to simplify, educate, respect others, and the environment while working harder than mules. These focuses of the program when brought into society cultivate growth and progression in times when they are definitely needed.